

Categorical Exclusion Documentation

A. Background

BLM Office: **Butte Falls Resource Area**

CE Number: **OR115-08-27**

Proposed Action Title: **Bowen Over Salvage**

In early January 2008, a series of winter storms hit the West Coast. The storms brought strong winds and heavy rain and snow to southern Oregon and northern California. Wind gusts over 60 miles per hour downed power lines and uprooted trees. Patches of green trees were blown down in a random pattern across the Butte Falls and Ashland Resource Areas. Since the windstorm, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has completed National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documentation through multiple Categorical Exclusions, making subsequent decisions to undertake activities to clear impacted roads in both resource areas. Through these actions, the BLM facilitates private land owner access to their land, restores BLM access to Federal lands for resource management and fire protection, and provides the public with safe passage on these roads.

In addition to Categorical Exclusions, the BLM is preparing NEPA documentation through two Environmental Assessments: *Butte Falls Blowdown Salvage EA* (Butte Falls Resource Area) and *Windy Soda Salvage EA* (Ashland Resource Area). These EAs will analyze the effects of salvaging trees blown down during the storm, storm-damaged trees not likely to survive, and trees hazardous to workers and the public. Because of the scattered nature of the blowdown trees, salvage would occur in a broad geographic area within the BLM's Butte Falls and Ashland Resource Areas.

In order to timely recover some economic value of the damaged timber, reduce potential insect infestation and reduce the risk of fire in advance of the coming fire season, the BLM proposes to implement the Bowen Over Salvage project as reviewed in this Categorical Exclusion.

Location of Proposed Action:

The Bowen Over Salvage project area is located on Bureau of Land Management, Butte Falls Resource Area lands south and east of the town of Butte Falls in:

Township 35 South, Range 2 East, sections 13, 23, 25 and
Township 35 South, Range 3 East, sections 7, 19, 31.

All proposed salvage would occur on lands designated as matrix in the 1995 *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP). Matrix lands are Federal land outside of reserves and special management areas available for timber harvest (RMP p. 38). The matrix lands in the project area are divided into northern general forest management area and connectivity/diversity block. The connectivity/diversity block is located in the south part of the project area in T35S, R2E, section 25. Areas proposed for salvage are within the Ginger Creek, Doubleday Creek, and Bowen Creek drainages.

Description of Proposed Action:

In the Bowen Over Salvage project, the BLM proposes to salvage 166 acres of timber blown down in a wind and snow storm event in January 2008. The storm resulted in widespread windthrown trees throughout the eastern portions of the Butte Falls Resource Area.

Salvage harvest systems would include tractor (144 acres), cable (1 acre) and skyline yarding (21 acres). Existing designated skid trails will be used. There will be no new road construction.

Salvage harvest would include wind thrown trees, damaged trees (trees with no green), and trees hazardous to workers and the public. No salvage under this project will occur in Late-Successional Reserves or Riparian Reserves. Trees proposed for salvage would include trees blown down by the wind storm in excess of those needed to meet the requirements for coarse woody debris and snags established in the Northwest Forest Plan¹ (p. C-40-43 and D-10) and Medford District ROD/RMP (p. 39 and 40). In order to meet snag and coarse woody debris requirements, the BLM would retain a minimum of 2 snags and 120 linear feet of coarse woody debris, on average per acre, across salvage units after salvage is completed. Damaged trees with no green remaining would be salvaged; however, standing portions of these trees or portions on the ground would be left on-site if needed to meet snag or coarse woody debris requirements or where salvage is not economically feasible. Merchantable coarse woody debris in excess of the amounts identified as minimum retention levels could be removed as part of the salvage activities.

To reduce the potential wildfire risk and prepare salvage units for tree planting, logging slash would be handpiled and burned, excavator piled and burned or lopped and scattered. Following site preparation activities, trees will be planted using a mixture of Douglas-fir, sugar pine, ponderosa pine, and incense cedar.

The BLM considered the areas proposed for salvage in this Categorical Exclusion for harvest in a recent planned timber sale and began analysis in the *Bowen Arrow/Twin Ranch Timber Sale and Landscape Restoration Environmental Assessment* (EA# OR115-06-06). As part of that analysis, the BLM completed all special status species surveys. The January 2008 storm event occurred prior to completion of the EA and a subsequent Decision.

Design Features for the Proposed Action

- In the Ginger Springs Municipal Watershed, require the use of chemical toilets at all project sites located within “Zone of Influence-2,” as identified in the *Ginger Springs Watershed Analysis and Management Plan*.
- Seasonally restrict harvest activities from March 1 to September 30 within 0.25 miles of known northern spotted owl sites. The seasonal restriction will be waived if BLM determines the owl is not nesting. During implementation of the proposed

¹ *Standards and Guidelines for Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*, April 1994.

action, if any new owls are discovered in harvest units following the sale date, activities will be halted until BLM determines appropriate measures.

- Seasonally restrict harvest activities from March 1 to August 1 within 0.25 miles of active raptor nests.
- Seasonally restrict harvest activities from February 1 to May 30 in T35S, R3E, section 31 for fisher.
- Retain known raptor nest trees.
- Retain two snags (16" DBH or greater) per acre on site, if snags are available and are not a hazard to the operation.
- Retain on-site large coarse woody debris of 120 linear feet (16" X 16') on average per acre.
- Restrict harvest activities within 300 feet of meadows.
- Seasonally restrict all rock hauling, timber hauling, and landing operations on native surface or inadequately rocked roads whenever soil moisture conditions or rain events could result in road damage or the transport of sediment to nearby stream channels, generally October 15 to May 15.
- Limit cable yarding during wet weather conditions if gouging and channelized flow could occur.
- Restrict tractor and mechanical operations to slopes generally less than 35 percent. In areas where it is necessary to exceed these gradients, utilize ridge tops where possible.
- Use existing skid roads in harvest units, where feasible. All other access must be approved by the BLM prior to yarding in the units.
- Restrict all tractor yarding, soil ripping, and excavator piling operations from October 15 to May 15, or when soil moisture exceeds 25 percent.
- Rip skid roads and landings, not needed for future use as determined by the BLM to a depth of 18 inches using a subsoiler or winged-toothed ripper.
- Require one-end log suspension, full suspension over streams and no streambank disturbance for cable yarding.
- Wash equipment including undercarriages prior to entry onto BLM-administered lands to remove mud, dirt, and plant parts.
- After final disturbance, seed and mulch ripped landings using native seed and weed-free straw.
- Protect known Special Status plant sites with buffers to prevent equipment traversing, trees being dragged through or slash piles burned at plant population site. The BLM completed surveys and no known Special Status Species are located in the harvest units. If, during implementation of the proposed project, any Special Status species are found, the BLM will determine appropriate measures to apply based on species, proposed treatment, site-specific environmental conditions, and available management recommendations.
- Store all hazardous materials and petroleum products in durable containers placed outside of riparian reserves so an accidental spill will be contained and will not drain into the stream system.

- Refuel equipment in locations outside riparian reserves.

B. Land Use Plan Conformance

Land Use Plan Name: *Medford District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (ROD/RMP)

Date Approved: June 1995

The proposed action is in conformance with the ROD/RMP because it is specifically provided for in the following, ROD/RMP decision:

“Provide for salvage harvest of timber killed or damaged by events such as wildfire, windstorms, insects, or disease, consistent with management objectives for other resources” (ROD/RMP, p. 72).

C. Compliance with NEPA

The Proposed Action is categorically excluded from further documentation under the NEPA in accordance with the Department of the Interior Manual Section 516 DM 11.9 C(8) and C(3) as follows:

Salvaging dead or dying trees not to exceed 250 acres, requiring no more than 0.5 miles of temporary road construction. Such activities:

- a. May include incidental removal of live or dead trees for landings, skid trails, and road clearing.*
 - b. May include temporary roads which are defined as roads authorized by contract, permit, lease, other written authorization, or emergency operation not intended to be part of the BLM transportation system and not necessary for long-term resource management. Temporary roads shall be designed to standards appropriate for the intended uses, considering safety, cost of transportation, and impacts on land and resources; and*
 - c. Shall require the treatment of temporary roads constructed or used so as to permit the reestablishment, by artificial or natural means, of vegetative cover on the roadway and areas where the vegetative cover was disturbed by the construction or use of the road, as necessary to minimize erosion from the disturbed area. Such treatment shall be designed to reestablish vegetative cover as soon as practicable, but at least within 10 years after the termination of the contract.*
 - d. For this CX, a dying tree is defined as a standing tree that has been severely damaged by forces such as fire, wind, ice, insects, or disease, and that in the judgment of an experienced forest professional or someone technically trained for the work, is likely to die within a few years. Examples include, but are not limited to:*
 - (i) Harvesting a portion of a stand damaged by a wind or ice event.*
 - (ii) Harvesting fire damaged trees.*
- (3) Seeding or reforestation of timber sales or burn areas where no chaining is done, no pesticides are used, and there is no conversion of timber type or conversion of non-forest*

to forest land. Specific reforestation activities covered include: seeding and seedling plantings, shading, tubing (browse protection), paper mulching, bud caps, ravel protection, application of non-toxic big game repellent, spot scalping, rodent trapping, fertilization of seed trees, fence construction around out-planting sites, and collection of pollen, scions and cones.

These categorical exclusions are appropriate in this situation because there are no extraordinary circumstances potentially having effects that may significantly affect the environment as documented in the following table. The proposed action has been reviewed, and none of the extraordinary circumstances described in 516 DM 2, Appendix 2 apply.

D. Categorical Exclusion Extraordinary Circumstances Documentation

The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	YES	NO
2.1 Have significant impacts on public health or safety.		X
<p>Rationale: Salvage operations will follow Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards designed to prevent job-related illness or injuries. Salvage operations will remove or fall standing trees that represent a hazard to workers and the public.</p> <p>The BLM will require the use of signs and flaggers for controlling traffic on roads that pass through the project area when necessary for public safety.</p>		
2.2 Have significant impacts on such natural resources and unique geographic characteristics as historic or cultural resources; park, recreation or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild or scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands (Executive Order 11990); floodplains (Executive Order 11988); national monuments; migratory birds; and other ecologically significant or critical areas.		X
<p>Rationale: Salvage will occur only within timber sale units. These units by design, are located outside the unique geographic areas listed above. There are no park, recreation, or refuge lands; wilderness areas; wild and scenic rivers; national natural landmarks; sole or principal drinking water aquifers; prime farmlands; wetlands; floodplains; national monuments; or other ecologically significant or critical areas within the project area.</p> <p>The project archeologist produced a cultural resource survey report and documented on <i>Project Tracking Form for Non-Exempt Undertakings under the Oregon BLM/SHPO Protocol</i> for Cultural Project Number OR110-08-27 a “No Effect Determination, No Resources” for the Bowen Over Salvage project. There will be no impact on cultural resources as a result of this project.</p> <p>The windstorm and resulting tree blowdown altered the habitat for migratory birds. The salvage would not change the overall habitat function as it now exists; therefore, the proposed action would not have significant impacts on migratory birds.</p>		
2.3 Have highly controversial environmental effects or involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources [NEPA Section 102(2)(E)].		X
<p>Rationale: The BLM acknowledges public opposition to salvage proposed in riparian reserves or late-successional reserves. While the Northwest Forest Plan and ROD/RMP recognized circumstances where salvage may occur within riparian reserves and late-successional reserves, this project will not enter these land use allocations. The project will occur in accordance with direction in the Medford District ROD/RMP.</p>		

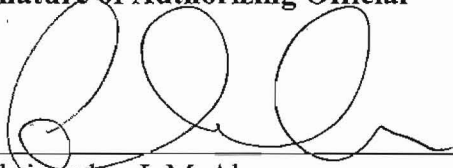
The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	YES	NO
<p>The BLM also acknowledges there may be a difference of opinion over the definition of a dying tree. The categorical exclusion for this salvage project defines a dying tree as “a standing tree that has been severely damaged by forces such as fire, wind, ice, insects, or disease, and that in the judgment of an experienced forest professional or someone technically trained for the work, is likely to die within a few years.” Only damaged trees with no green remaining would be salvaged, except those needed to meet the requirements for coarse woody debris and snags, as established in the Northwest Forest Plan and the Medford District ROD/RMP. While there has been some controversy among scientists regarding the amount of dead trees that should remain after salvage to serve as coarse woody debris and snags, whether this is “highly” controversial is questionable. In any case, this was resolved in the Medford District ROD/RMP that was accompanied by an EIS that addressed this. This project will leave 2 snags and 120 linear feet of coarse woody debris on average per acre within the salvage units, in accordance with the Medford District ROD/RMP.</p>		
<p>2.4 Have highly uncertain and potentially significant environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists for the Bowen Over Salvage project reviewed the project and determined there is no threat of significant environmental effects or unique or unknown environmental risks.</p>		
<p>2.5 Establish a precedent for future action or represent a decision in principle about future actions with potentially significant environmental effects.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: Salvage operations have occurred on the Medford District in the past and are likely to occur in the future. However, each salvage project contains its own set of conditions that must be evaluated on its own merit, as the BLM has done with this project. Land use allocations and environmental conditions, such as remaining vegetation, slopes, soils, and streams, are unique to each project and must be considered anew as each opportunity for salvage occurs.</p>		
<p>2.6 Have a direct relationship to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental effects.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The BLM interdisciplinary team of resource specialists reviewed the project based on current conditions on the ground. The team did not find any resource issue of concern that will be affected by this project. The salvage project would reduce the potential of an insect infestation and the increased fire hazard risk within the project area resulting from conditions caused by the blowdown. Implementation of full riparian reserves and Design Features will aid in the preventing stream sedimentation. The Project Design Features serve as a basis for resource protection in the implementation of this project.</p>		
<p>2.7 Have significant impacts on properties listed, or eligible for listing, on the National Register of Historic Places as determined by either the bureau or office.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: The project archeologist produced a cultural resource survey report and documented on <i>Project Tracking Form for Non-Exempt Undertakings under the Oregon BLM/SHPO Protocol</i> for Cultural Project Number OR110-08-27 a “No Effect Determination, No Resources” for the Bowen Over Salvage project. There will be no impact on cultural resources as a result of this project.</p>		
<p>2.8 Have significant impacts on species listed, or proposed to be listed, on the List of Endangered or Threatened Species, or have significant impacts on designated Critical Habitat for these species.</p>		X
<p>Rationale: Prior to the windstorm the BLM had surveyed the salvage areas for listed and proposed Threatened and Endangered plants and did not find any occurrence of these species. Known spotted owl sites within the project area were surveyed and no spotted owls were found. The salvage will not change the function of spotted owl habitat and project design features provide for seasonal restriction if a known</p>		

The proposed categorical exclusion action will:	YES	NO
site is nesting. If, during implementation of the proposed action, a species is discovered the BLM will apply the appropriate protective measures in accordance with the Design Features listed for this project. There is no designated Critical Habitat within the project area for plants or animals. Activities are not proposed for riparian reserves, therefore, designated Critical Habitat for fish will not be affected.		
2.9 Violate a Federal law, or a State, local, or tribal law or requirement imposed for the protection of the environment.		X
Rationale: The BLM interdisciplinary team for the Bowen Over Salvage project reviewed the project for compliance with applicable laws such as the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, Endangered Species Act, Clean Water Act, National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Air Act, and Archaeological Resources Protection Act, among others. The specialists found the project conforms to the direction given for the management of public lands in the Medford District ROD/RMP, which complies with all applicable Federal and State law.		
2.10 Have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on low income or minority populations (Executive Order 12898).		X
Rationale: Based on past projects in the Butte Falls Resource Area, the proposed salvage will provide job opportunities in communities such as Butte Falls, the closest incorporated city to the project area. In the 2000 census, 22 percent of the population of Butte Falls was below the poverty level. The Bowen Over Salvage could provide job opportunities for Butte Falls that range from the harvesting trees to processing the wood into lumber.		
2.11 Limit access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites on Federal lands by Indian religious practitioners or significantly adversely affect the physical integrity of such sacred sites (Executive Order 13007).		X
Rationale: The project archaeologist conducted a cultural survey for the project area. No Indian sacred sites were identified during the survey.		
2.12 Contribute to the introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or non-native invasive species known to occur in the area or actions that may promote the introduction, growth, or expansion of the range of such species (Federal Noxious Weed Control Act and Executive Order 13112).		X
Rationale: The proposed action does not result in measurable changes to the current baseline of the risk, or actual introduction, continued existence, or spread of noxious weeds or nonnative invasive species in or from the project area. The implementation of Design Features such as washing equipment prior to entry to the project area and using native seed and weed-free mulch after final disturbance, and the ongoing treatment of noxious weeds in the project area will reduce the risk of introduction or spread of noxious weeds. Existing and likely continuing activities including, but not limited to, motor vehicle traffic, recreation use, rural and urban development, road construction, timber harvest, and natural processes can contribute to the introduction, existence, and spread of noxious weeds and invasive species. Vehicles accessing the project area would stay on existing roads (no additional permanent roads are proposed), reducing the potential of picking up and dispersing noxious weeds or seed. The proposed action does not introduce any vector for spread or introduction beyond such vectors already found.		

I considered the potential for significant impacts to threatened and endangered or Bureau sensitive species of fish, wildlife, and plants; cultural resources; noxious weeds; and soil and hydrologic resources. Where appropriate, BLM has completed surveys for those resources and

implemented appropriate management recommendations where deemed necessary. The Design Features in Section A of this Categorical Exclusion Documentation will further protect those resources from the potential for significant impacts resulting from implementation of the Proposed Action. Implementing these CE authorities enables the BLM to timely recover some economic value of the damaged timber, reduce potential insect infestation danger and reduce the fire risk in advance of the coming fire season.

E. Signature of Authorizing Official



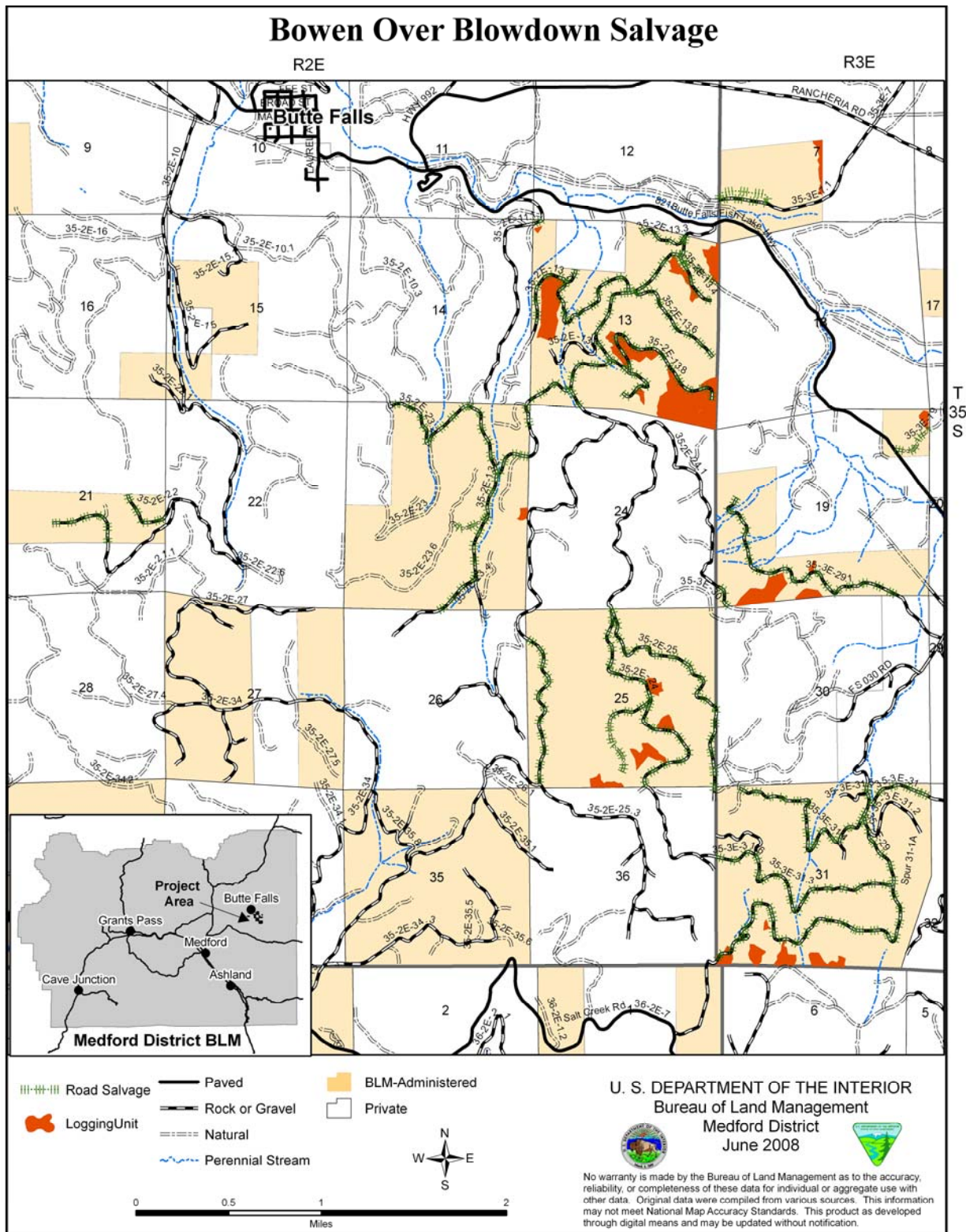
6/19/08

Christopher J. McAlear
Field Manager
Butte Falls Resource Area

Date

F. Contact Person

For additional information concerning this CE review, contact John Bergin, Forest Manager, 541-618-2265, or Jean Williams, Environmental Coordinator, 541-618-2385, Medford District BLM, 3040 Biddle Road, Medford, OR 97504



Reviewers:

Name	Title	Date	Initials
Jean Williams	NEPA Coordinator	6/19/08	QW
Marcia Wineteer	Botanist	6/18/08	mw
Linda Hale	Wildlife Biologist	6/16/08	LH
Steve Liebhardt	Fisheries Biologist	6/12/08	SL
Shawn Simpson	Hydrologist	6/12/08	SS
Ken Van Etten	Soil Scientist	6/19/08	KAV.
Leanne Mruzik	Fire/Fuels Specialist	6/17/08	LM
Ann Ramage John McNeel	District Archaeologist Cultural Technician	6/18/08	★
Randy Bryan	Engineer	6/18/08	RRB
Trish Lindaman	Outdoor Recreation Planner	6/16/08	TL
John Osmanski	Forester/Prescription Writer	6/12/08	J.O.


U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
BUTTE FALLS RESOURCE AREA
MEDFORD DISTRICT

DECISION RECORD

Based on the Categorical Exclusion Review for the Bowen Over Salvage project (OR115-08-27), I have determined the proposed action, salvaging 166 acres of dead and dying trees, is in accordance with the Categorical Exclusion authorities provided for in the Department of the Interior manual sections 516 DM 11.9 C(8) and C(3), and therefore involves no significant impacts to the human environment and requires no further environmental analysis.

It is my decision to implement the salvage as described in the Bowen Over Salvage Categorical Exclusion Review. Implementing this salvage enables the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to recover some economic value of the damaged timber, reduce potential insect infestation and reduce the fire risk in advance of the coming fire season.

In accordance with the BLM Forest Management Regulations (43 CFR 5003.2(1)), the decision for this timber sale will not become effective, or be open to formal protest, until the first Notice of Sale appears in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the lands affected by the decision are located. Protests may be filed with the authorized officer within 15 days of the publication date of the notice of timber sale advertisement. Under 43 CFR 5003.3 (b), any protest filed with the authorized officer shall contain a written statement of reasons for protesting the decision. A decision on this protest would be subject to appeal to the Interior Board of Land Appeals, although under 43 CFR 5003.1 subsection (a), filing a notice of appeal under 43 CFR part 4 does not automatically suspend the effect of a decision governing or relating to forest management under 43 CFR 5003.2 or 5003.3



Christopher J. McAlear
Butte Falls Field Manager
Medford District

6/19/08

Date